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3 May 1949

TO: ADSO

FROM: Chief, FBI []

SUBJECT: Intelligence Operations Against Albania from Italy and Greece

1. Foreign Branch P at the present time is engaged in two intelligence operations directed against Albania and will mount a third during June. Details thereon are set forth below.

PLAN I

2. Joint operation with Italian Naval Intelligence for the infiltration of intelligence teams into Albania by air.

3. This organization was first approached by Italian Naval Intelligence in the spring of 1948 with a proposal for the mounting of joint operations in Albania. In July 1948, final approval was given to an OSO commitment for such an operation. This commitment included the provision of a C-47 aircraft for use in air drops of personnel and for supplies and funds. An Italian Naval Intelligence case officer and an OSO case officer worked jointly in developing this operation.

4. A C-47 aircraft was supplied in October 1948, and other operational supplies were obtained in Germany and Switzerland. The W/T communications tie into a base station in Italy.

5. The team members were recruited from DP camps in Italy and Greece, with the exception of one individual whose transportation from Germany was arranged by OSO. Agents sent into Albania will make connection with local resistance movements through leaders of such movements identified in two memoranda to OPC dated 18 January and 15 March 1949 (copies of these are attached). All individuals have been checked in OSO files for derogatory information. The Albanians involved were selected because of their family connections in, and their familiarity with, the Elbasan and Mirdite regions of Central Albania, where it had been previously reported that resistance groups were in existence. Both Moslem and Catholic agents were included in the teams selected. The Albanian leader in Italy who has worked with the Italian Navy and OSO in mounting this operation is Ismail VERLACI.

6. The immediate objective of this plan is the infiltration of agent teams by air, equipped with W/T sets, to make contact with established resistance groups for the collection of intelligence. The initial W/T teams were ordered to survey the local situation,

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establish a communications base, and arrange for the continued reception of operational supplies and personnel as required. Specific intelligence targets were assigned by Washington, including information desired on resistance groups, internal political conditions, various defense installations, and order of battle.

7. This plan entered its operational phase on 15 February 1949, when four agents forming two teams each with separate W/T communications were dropped under excellent conditions over a pinpoint in the Serrisht district, in the Mirdite region of Albania. The following agents were dropped:

First Team

Alush LLESHANAKU
Xhevdet BLOSHMI

Second Team

Ndue GJONMARKAJ
Ndue MELYSHI

Shyqri BICAKU and Kole CUNI, comprising a follow-up team, are being held in reserve because of ill health.

8. No radio contact has yet been made with the first two teams. A reconnaissance flight was made over Albania under optimum weather conditions on the night of 12 April, but no ground signals were observed in the area where they were expected in accordance with the pre-arranged plan.

9. On 24 April, Ismail VERLACI received a commercial cable from Castoria, Greece, signed by LLESHANAKU stating that he and BLOSHMI had arrived safely in Castoria. On 28 April he received a cable stating that the two individuals had arrived in Athens. The Athens Station has been instructed to contact these individuals immediately for debriefing.

PLAN II

10. An entirely separate plan is presently being mounted in Italy and is expected to enter its operational phase in June. At the present time these agents, who will probably be air-dropped, appear to have no resistance or propaganda potential. If at a later date such potentials should develop, OPC will be informed.

PLAN III

11. This operation, which was approved 1 March 1949, involves the use of personnel from the Keva Organization, the largest organization of refugee Greeks from Southern Albania (known as Northern Epiros), for the collection of intelligence. Agents for this operation are Stefanos VENAKIDES, secretary of Keva and an employee

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of the National Bank of Greece, and Nikolaos PANGOS, a physician and vice-president of Keva. These two individuals have been engaged for some time in running agents into Southern Albania. They report a total of eighteen agents active in and near the Albanian towns of Argyrocastro, Leskoviki, Permeti, Velona, Koritza, and Himara. At the present time fifteen couriers are available for border crossings. A list of twenty-seven known agents and couriers of Keva, with their present locations and occupations, is attached hereto. The Keva Organization, as was pointed out in our memorandum dated 18 January, has wide functions, involving relief activities in Greece and resistance in Albania, and is reported to have an active membership of 5,000 in Greece and 2,300 in Southern Albania.

12. Objectives of this operation include collection of intelligence on resistance organizations in Southern Albania and their programs and plans, data on port and airfield installations and construction, extent and nature of Albanian assistance to the Greek rebels, and order of battle. Couriers will be sent across the Albanian frontier to initiate the organization of agent networks within Albania for the achievement of these objectives. All known agents, potential agents, and couriers have been checked in OSO files for derogatory information.

13. This operation is now being mounted. Headquarters are presently in Athens, but it is planned to establish an advance operational base at Jannina. It is anticipated that the first courier teams operating under our direction and control will be dispatched within the next six weeks. Five W/T operators are now in training in Greece. W/T communications will be established as soon as possible to a base station in Greece. In the meantime a small number of reports of value, resulting from the activities of the two Greek officials of Keva identified above, have been received. It is anticipated that the useful production of this operation will increase considerably when our direction and support are felt.

Attachments: 3

1. Memo, dtd 18 Jan
2. Memo dtd 15 March
3. List of couriers
and agents

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